

*Henry*

# Obstinacy and Passion.



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## Obstinacy and Passion.

To-DAY I am going to tell you about two little boys at a village-school, such as you perhaps may go to. On the day I am speaking of, these two boys were kept in school at play-time for different faults. Think,

after reading about them, whether you have ever been like either of them. You need not think whether you know other children like them, for that is not so much your business.

Dicky Moore was a very little boy, who had not been long at school. He was very short for his age, but stout and strong, with black eyes and short curly hair ; and he could laugh, and halloo, and play with anybody. And he learnt pretty well, and soon got to say his prayers, and his A, B, C, and to spell a little. He had one chief fault, and that was obstinacy.

Sometimes, if he had made up his mind to play at ball, and the other boys wanted to play at horses, nothing would move him from his own fancy. He would say, “ Well then, I won’t play at all with you ! ” Just as if nobody could play without him. And then he would go a little way off, and toss his ball up and

catch it again by himself. Dame Wood, the good old schoolmistress, used to say, “Dick, you are only punishing yourself.”

And so he was. For when he saw Tom, and Will, and Harry, all racing round the green, each with another boy for his horse, he longed in his heart to be with them. He knew what fun it would be to hold the string which each two-legged horse held in his mouth for a bridle, and how he should like to pull in the horse that kicked, and pranced, and tossed his head so much. But he had an odd sort of pride, in pretending not to care, and in shewing that he had not changed his mind.

He was known once to go without his supper, because his sister had got his milk-basin, and his mother told him not to mind. He would not have the milk out of another basin; and you may fancy how hungry he was before he went to sleep.

These obstinate fits did not come very often; but they were bad fits for himself, and very troublesome to other people.

On the day I am telling you of, Dicky had said his spelling very well, and was reading words of three letters. He thought he knew them all quite right, and was going through them with one of the elder girls. At last he came to "go." And unluckily Dicky called it "jo."

Some of the children who were near laughed, and one particularly, who was younger than himself. He looked very red and angry; and when his teacher told him to spell it again, and sound it hard, g, o, go, Dick looked fiercely at the boy who had laughed most, and again said, "jo."

His teacher said it herself; but Dick's fit had come over him, again he said it wrong.

"Please, mistress, Dick won't say, go," said the teacher aloud.

"Come here, Dick," said Dame Wood, "and begin at the beginning."

Dick spelt very well till he came to the dangerous word, and then again said, "g, o, jo."

His mistress let him go on to the end of the page ; he took great pains to spell all the words right but that one.

So she made him stand up on a bench, with his face to the wall, till the others had done.

That was not a very pleasant thing, for he had to stand quite upright for fear of falling, and there was nothing to lean against. What pleasure could Dick have in being there, rather than saying the word right, after he had been told how to say it ?

The pleasure of his own way, and shewing that he would not be mastered ; and perhaps he thought the others would wonder and admire him for being so sturdy.

When the others had done, and were going out to play, the mistress called him again, and again he said all right till he came to that one word. Then he shut his mouth, and muttered the wrong word through his teeth, and nothing more would he do.

His mistress sent the others out, and put him in a little shed at the back of the school-room. It was almost dark when she had shut the door, and then Dick was left a prisoner with the bread he had brought for his dinner. He was not allowed to have his piece of cheese with it. If he chose to be good, Dame Wood told him to knock at the door, and she should hear him as she sat at her cottage-door knitting.

Dick peeped through the cracks of the door, and looked out into the garden, which seemed much pleasanter, as you may suppose, than his dark shed. Then he went and sat down in a corner with his back

against the wall. There he heard the other children laughing and playing at a distance. Something seemed to rise in his throat, and he was very near crying ; but he gulped it down, and thought, “ I won’t give up for any thing.”

Now, if he had said this when he was tempted to do wrong, it would have been well indeed ; but he was hardening himself against doing right. Something said within him, how wicked and wrong it was not to mind his teachers. He had been taught and knew well enough that it is God who sets our father, and mother, and ministers, and teachers, over us, and that we should obey them because they are in His place. But Dick chose his own foolish way, instead of the right way. All the time he was very unhappy ; and he thought if Dame Wood should go into her neighbour’s, as she sometimes did, and he could not hear the sound of the children at play,

he should feel very lone and strange. He started up when he heard a scratching near him, and jumped to the other side of the shed. He would not have been so easily frightened if he had had a good conscience. He had heard Dame Wood say there were rats in her shed ; but at any other time he would not have been afraid of rats.

He took his crust of bread and eat it, and then put himself down against the wall again. He heard a step at the door, and that was pleasant after he had been an hour shut up. It was Dame Wood.

“ Dick, will you be good, and say that word ? ” Dick’s obstinacy got the better,—he made no answer.

Presently he heard her go away, and then he felt miserable enough, though he did not own it to himself.

At two o’clock his mistress fetched him out into the school-room, and tried him once more. Still he refused to speak ; and again he was set

on the bench, with his face to the wall. He felt thirsty, and his legs ached : and now he began bitterly to repent that he had not said the word at once. If it was to come over again, he thought he would not have behaved so ; but he was too proud now to humble himself, and let his conscience get the better. He thought if he could but hold out, they could not keep him there all day.

In the evening, the clergyman's wife came in, and you may suppose she asked why Dick was there. She told Dame Wood to take him home after school to his mother, and desire her to punish him. But first she spoke to Dick, and asked him what pleasure there could be in giving up all his play, and some of his food, and the comfort of being good. She reminded him who it is that tempts all people, even little children, to do wrong ; she reminded him of the history of Adam and Eve, which he had learned. But nothing moved

Dick : so after school Dame Wood took him by the hand, and led him down the village to his mother's cottage. She drew him along, as he followed her hanging back ; and when he saw his school-fellows happy and merry as they went different ways home, he repented of his behaviour, but would not try to overcome his obstinacy.

When his mother heard the history, she sighed, and said nobody knew the trouble she had sometimes with that boy. His little sister came running to him to ask him to play with her. Dick was near giving way, when he saw her merry, good-humoured little face ; but he turned away his eyes, and even pushed her away. The poor little thing went sorrowfully away, and then Dick was still more unhappy in his heart, for he was very fond of his little sister—the only one he had.

His mother took him up stairs into the little loft where he slept,

and bade him stay there till his father came home. She gave him no milk or butter, but a piece of dry bread and some water. He sat down by the bed, leaning his head against it, and fell into a doze. Then he began to dream, but it was all of being punished at school, and of being beaten by his father. This had happened before in some of his obstinate fits, and sometimes had cured them for the time. Next he dreamed about being at play on the green, or in the garden with his little sister, whose horse he used to be, carrying her on his back, and of eating his bread and milk under the garden-hedge, as they sometimes did together. When he woke again, he felt very sad, and sighed deeply. He would have given a great deal to have had those dreams true. Who had hindered it but himself?

Now he heard his little sister creep up stairs and come to the door. He was afraid he should give up, if

she came in, so he fastened it with the button inside. Then he heard her little voice: "Dick, mother says, won't you be good?" Her voice seemed as if she had been crying; and then Dick felt more ready to cry than when he was in the shed; but he hid his face on the bed, and made no answer. She stayed quiet there a little while, and then he heard her climb down stairs again.

Now it was getting dusk, and he started, for he heard his father's voice. At other times he was glad to see him home, but now he trembled; and he listened to the sound of his mother talking to him, and knew she must be telling of him. Then all was silent, till he heard little Jenny creep up again, and say,  
"Oh, Dick, do let me in!"

Dick got up and opened the door; but he went and hid his face upon the bed again.

Little Jenny came up close to him,

and said, "Do be good, Dick,—don't be a bad boy; you will be afraid when it gets quite dark, and you think about not being good. You will have to go to bed without saying your prayers; because," she said in a whisper, "God will not hear our prayers, if we don't try to be good."

Then she began to sob, and said, "Perhaps if you say your prayers, you will feel good then."

Now, when Dick heard little Jenny say this, and thought how happy they used to be, when, after their supper and their play, they knelt down by their mother to say their evening prayers, he could hold no longer; first he began to sob, and then to cry,—and when once he began, he could not stop.

"Oh, I know you will be good," said Jenny, clinging to him and kissing him.

"It's too late," Dick said, sobbing;

"father will beat me — didn't he say so?"

"Yes, that made me cry, and come to you. But never mind, if father beats you, only say you will be good, and try to be good to-morrow; and then God will forgive you, and so will they, and we shall be happy again."

Dick got up and took hold of her hand, and they went down together.

And though Dick knew that his father would beat him, and thought he should be in disgrace at school, yet he was really happier then than he had been all day, while he was proud that nobody had got the better of him. He was happier because he meant to own he had been wrong, and his conscience told him that was the way to begin to mend.

When they got down stairs, Dick could not speak; he stood before his father sobbing.

"Are you sorry, boy, for your

bad behaviour?" said his father in a stern voice.

Jenny, who was holding his hand, squeezed it, to remind him what to say.

"Yes, father, I am," said Dick.

"Pray don't beat him, father," said little Jenny.

But Dick did not say so, for now he was feeling penitent as he ought, he knew he deserved punishment; and now his obstinacy was taking the right turn, he was resolved to bear it.

"Go away to your mother, Jenny; Dick must be punished, to make him remember it."

So his father made him hold out his hand, and gave him several hard cuts with a switch. Dick cried out, as you may suppose; but his obstinacy was got the better of; and when his father said,

"Now, my boy, I hope you will remember: will you try to behave better? he answered,

"Yes, father, I will."

Then his father called Jenny, and said, "Fetch his supper down," for Dick had not eaten it, "and you may go and eat yours with him."

Jenny fetched the supper, and they sat down side by side to eat it. But they did not talk and laugh as usual, for Dick was unhappy, and besides his hand smarted. And Jenny was unhappy because Dick was. She hoped he would never be naughty all day again.

Dick hoped so too, when he woke in the morning. He thought he would say his prayers, and pray to God to help him to keep down his proud spirit; he thought he would remember all he had been told about not giving way to temptation; he knew he ought to own it, when he had done wrong. So after he had eat his bread and milk without speaking, he took up his cap and his spelling-book, and came up close to his mother, saying,

"Mother, I'll tell mistress that I'll not do so any more."

Then he set off running to school. He was half afraid his pride might rise up again. It was well he was afraid. He strengthened himself against his proud spirit; and as he went along, he said to himself, "I won't let it! I won't let it!"

When he came in at the door, the little ones (they were all little) turned their heads to look at him. He kept his eyes away from those who had laughed at him before; and that was a wise thing to do. He hung his cap on the peg, and he walked straight up to Dame Wood, looking rather red, and as he stood before her, he said,

"Please, mistress, I won't behave so any more."

"I hope you won't, my boy; you must strive against it. You may not get over it all at once. Your proud heart is your great enemy. You must set yourself against it,

just as you set yourself against your letters yesterday. You have been punished, and it was all for your good. Where is your spelling?"

Dick opened his book, and went steadily on. He was almost afraid his pride would start up when he came to g, o; but he said to himself, "I won't let it;" and he said that, and all his lesson, quite right. Once or twice he thought the boys who had laughed at him would say afterwards,

"Ah, Dick, you were forced to give in at last. I knew you would not stand out." But he knew he had done right, and he thought how happy he should go to bed at night, and how merry Jenny and he should be together at supper and at play. And so they were. And from that time Dick began to get the better of his obstinate ways, though he often had fits of pride, and sometimes they almost got the better of him. But as he got older, and came

to understand how to pray to God to help him against it, he found it easier and easier. And then he had a pleasure in getting the better of himself, much greater, as you may suppose, than the pleasure of standing out against his parents and teachers.

Now, have you forgotten about the other little boy who was punished on the same day? The story about him is a much sadder one; though you may think it was sad enough for Dicky Moore to be shut up in a dark shed with no nice dinner to eat, and afterwards to be punished by his father.

Jack Davies was the name of the other boy; and if you had seen him at play sometimes, you would have thought him so merry and good-natured, that you would have longed to play with him; and if you had seen him at his tasks in school, you would have wished to get through them as quickly as he did. But he

had a very great fault—he was very passionate. His fits came on like Dicky Moore's, but they were more frightful to see, though they were sooner over. When he was angry with anybody, he all at once became like a little mad creature. His face got red, and his eyes seemed ready to start out of his head. He roared, as his playfellows said, like a young bull; and it was dangerous to come near him, for he would not only kick, and scratch, and fight, but he would lay hold of any thing that came in his way, to throw at the person he was angry with. And often too he would use bad words, such as I do not like to name here.

On this day he had a dreadful fit of passion in school-time. The little girl who sat next him began pulling his book. Jack said at first, “don’t,” and “be quiet, can’t you?” in a whisper. But she was a very teasing girl (and that I must tell you is a bad fault), and would

silily go on pulling Jack's book. Now, he could have complained to the mistress, who would have stopped her at once. But Jack chose to right himself; so the next time she did it, he gave her a violent blow, which knocked her off the bench, and was going to strike her again, when one of the older girls pulled him back and held his hands. Then Jack began screaming with all his might, and kicked the girl who held him, making such a noise that nothing else could be heard in the school. And having once begun he could not stop himself, but threw himself down on the floor, screaming and kicking, while the school-mistress asked what had happened.

When she heard the story, she made the teasing little girl go and stand with her face to the wall; and she left Jack on the floor, for he had screamed till he could scream no longer. As soon as school was over, she took a stout handkerchief

and tied his legs together where he lay ; for she said he was like a mad creature, and must be treated as such.

There he stayed all play-hours, and all the time of afternoon school. He did not try to move, for he had tired himself out with passion, and could scarcely stir. He had some bread and water given him, and when the fit was over, he would have been glad enough to ask forgiveness and make up ; but his mistress had often forgiven him before, and she wished to make him remember it.

In the evening she untied his legs, and talked to him about his terrible way of putting himself into a passion, and how he might one day hurt himself, or somebody else, in a way he would be sorry for. And that he should pray to God to help him to get the better of this fault, and try hard to stop the beginnings of it. Then Jack, who had become as meek and gentle as a lamb, sobbed and

begged pardon, and said he would never do so again. And upon this he was sent home, and nothing more was said.

But you would hardly guess what happened not a week after this. He was playing with his brothers and sisters, quite quietly and good-humouredly, as it seemed. His youngest sister Sukey pretended to be a great dog that belonged to a gentleman who lived near. The dog could fetch and carry, and they had often watched how its master would drop his handkerchief or stick, and how the great shaggy dog would bring it back, wagging its tail and looking as if it was going to speak. Jack was the dog's master, and threw things to the other end of the room : Sukey picked them up in her mouth, and when she brought them to Jack, how they all laughed !

But presently they heard a carriage come by, and Sukey ran to look at it, and so did the rest. Jack did

not like his play to be stopped, and he called rather angrily to Sukey,

"Come back, I say; come and play, I tell you." But Sukey took no notice. Then Jack grew more angry, and at last she said,

"I can't; I am tired of play. I am not going to play any more; how tiresome you are!—I won't come."

"You won't!" said Jack, who was red with passion; and snatching his mother's scissors that lay on the table, he threw them at his sister.

If he could have known what followed! The scissors struck poor little Sukey on the forehead. The blood burst out; there was a great gash. Sukey screamed, and the other children screamed too. Their mother jumped up, and pushed Jack out of her way, as she ran to Sukey.

Jack's anger turned into fright and grief when it was too late. He knelt down on the floor, leaning his head on his mother's chair, and cried

bitterly. He could not bear to look at his poor little sister, as his mother tried to quiet her, and looked at the sad wound, and sent to call her neighbours to tell her what to do. He could not bear to ask how much she was hurt ; he ran out into the garden that he might not hear her cry.

It seemed to him an hour before he heard any thing. All seemed still in the cottage, and then he got more and more frightened. He could not bear to stay where he was, and he crept into the back kitchen, and looked through the door.

Sukey was sitting on her mother's knee, looking quite pale ; she had a great plaster on her forehead ; and Dame Brown, who was very clever about such things, was standing by comforting her mother, who looked as pale as poor little Sukey herself.

Dame Brown was the first to see Jack, and called out, "Here, Jack, see what you have done."

But when he began to sob and cry, as if his heart would break, she stopped; and Sukey said,  
“Don’t scold him now.”

This made Jack sob still more; when he could speak, he asked,

“Is she much hurt, and will she get well? I shall never be happy again.”

He could not be happy, indeed, for nobody could tell him whether the wound was very bad or not. The more patient poor little Sukey was, the more unhappy Jack felt. Nobody now scolded him or said any thing about him, but his own conscience scolded and troubled him. He was afraid to go to bed and think about it. He said his prayers, and begged forgiveness; and then he recollect ed how often he had given way to his passion and anger, and how wicked he had been every time to do so; just as much when no harm came of it, as now when so much harm had followed.

He dreamed all night about it; and the next morning all he said was to beg he might come home after morning school, to know what the doctor said. He heard the doctor's horse trot by, or thought he did, and then how he longed to get home!

He ran as fast as he could; and how glad he felt when his mother told him the doctor said Sukey would be well in time!

"You ought to be thankful enough," said Dame Brown, who was sitting with Sukey on her knee, "that it was no worse. If you don't mind, Jack, you will do something worse some day."

This was a lesson Jack never forgot. Long after Sukey left off the plaster, there was a sad scar, which reminded him of that terrible wound and of his fright. Whenever he felt tempted to be in a passion, he thought of it. As he grew older, he tried harder to cure himself of this fault;

and when he said his prayers, he always prayed to be helped to do so. And doing this, he got the better of it; and now, I believe, it comes quite easy to him to stop his angry feelings as soon as they spring up.

